DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 067 631 CS 000 167

TITLE	Model Programs, Compensatory Education. Remedial Reading Laboratories, El Paso, Texas.
INSTITUTION	American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	National Center for Educational Communication (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO	DHEW-OE-72-78
PUB DATE	72
NOTE	22p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Supt. of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402 (Catalog No. HE 5.237:37079, $0.20)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	*Compensatory Education; Disadvantaged Youth; Mexican Americans; Reading; Reading Ability; *Reading Achievement; *Reading Programs; *Remedial Reading; *Student Attitudes; Urban Education

ABSTRACT

The Remedial Reading Laboratories program was designed to improve the reading achievement of disadvantaged students in grades four through 12 and thereby enable them to profit from regular classroom instruction. The program also aimed at improving the students' self-esteem and self-confidence. In 1969-70 classes were offered to over 1,000 disadvantaged students. Selection of students was based on objective criteria, defined by specially derived formulas. In general, students selected were of average intelligence but were reading from 1 to 1.5 years below their grade level. The majority of the target population served is Mexican-American. Language difficulties often associated with their background complicated the students' reading problems. Remedial labs located in each of the target area schools are staffed by special reading teachers. Students are taught in small groups of about eight pupils for 50 to 60 minutes each day. Classroom procedures are based on the use of individually prescribed instruction. Results of teacher evaluations and follow up studies of students showed an improvement in attitudes toward self and school, and an increased ability to handle grade-level subject matter. (Author)

ED 067631

Model Programs

Compensatory Education

Remedial Reading Laboratories
El Paso, Texas

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ED 067631

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DHEW Publication No. (OE) 72-78

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
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Office of Education
S. P. Marland, Jr., *Commissioner of Education*

Superintendent of Documents Catalog No. HE 5.237:37079

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
WASHINGTON: 1972

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 - Price 20 cents

Stock Number 1780-0933

FOREWORD

This is the third in NCEC's *Model Programs* series, whose purpose is to inform educators about successful ongoing programs and to provide them with sufficient information to decide if locally modified replications would be desirable. Included in this series are descriptions of 15 "successful" compensatory education programs for disadvantaged children currently operating in the Nation's schools.

Under contract to the Office of Education, the American Institutes for Research in the Behavioral Sciences, Palo Alto, Calif., identified—through a literature search and nominations by local, State, and national educational agencies—over 400 candidate programs in this area. Of this number only 17 met the stringent criteria for success established by AIR in conjunction with OE. It should be noted that most of the programs rejected during the study were not rejected because they were demonstrated failures but rather because their evaluation methodology was so inadequate that a conclusion about success or failure could not be drawn.

Short descriptions of each program in the series have been prepared, covering such topics as context and objectives, personnel, methodology, inservice training, parent involvement, materials and equipment, facilities, schedule, evaluation data, budget, and sources for further information.

Six of the programs in this series were formerly written up in the *It Works* series published by OE in 1969. These six continue to operate successfully, as evidenced by the evaluation data; and since the *It Works* booklets are out of print, the program descriptions have been updated and included in this *Model Programs* series.

Two other programs—Programed Tutorial Reading Project, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Summer Junior High Schools, New York, New York—identified as exemplary compensatory education programs were included in the former *Model Programs* series on reading. Since these program descriptions are still available from the U.S. Government Printing Office, they were not republished for this series.

Two previous *Model Programs* series have been issued—on reading (10 programs) and childhood education (33 programs). Booklets on these programs are available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 for 15 to 25 cents each.

Remedial Reading Laboratories
El Paso, Texas

Overview

The Remedial Reading Laboratories program was designed to improve the reading achievement of disadvantaged students in grades four through 12 and thereby enable them to profit from regular classroom instruction. The program also aimed at improving the students' self-confidence and self-esteem. In 1969-70 Remedial Reading Laboratory classes were offered to over 1,000 disadvantaged students. Selection of students was based on objective criteria defined by specially derived formulas. In general, students selected were of average intelligence but were reading from 1 to 1.5 years below their grade level.

The Remedial Reading Laboratories, supported under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act title I since 1965, serves pupils from poverty pockets within the city. The majority of the target population served is Mexican-American. Language difficulties often associated with their background complicate the students' reading problems. Remedial labs, located in each of the target area schools, are staffed by special reading teachers. Students are taught in small groups of about eight pupils for 50 to 60 minutes each day.

Classroom procedures are based on the use of individually prescribed instruction. Each teacher is encouraged to adjust the activities and materials she selects to the

needs of the students. To help teachers in this process, two books *A Diagnostic Approach to Remedial Reading* and *The Teacher's Source Book* were published and distributed to them. They serve as guidebooks for class organization and instructional methodology. In addition to the special reading teachers, program personnel include a consultant, evaluator, counselors, social workers, and nurses.

Evaluation data collected by the program include standardized achievement tests and teacher ratings of student behavior. Standardized test results for the last 3 years of program evaluation showed that students in the labs made reading achievement gains greater than would be expected of nondisadvantaged children who did not have reading problems. Results of teacher evaluations and followup studies of students' grades after leaving the program showed an improvement in attitudes toward self and school, and an increased ability to handle grade-level subject matter.

Description

Context and Objectives

El Paso is located on the border between the United States and Mexico, on the Rio Grande River directly across from Juarez, Mexico. El Paso's population of approximately 400,000 includes many Mexican-Americans, a large proportion of whom are in disadvantaged areas of the city. In 1970 the school district reported that 14 percent of the approximately 65,000 children enrolled in the district came from low-income families according to title I criteria. Of these low-income students, 95 percent were Mexican-Americans. Population density of target areas was high, and families moved frequently.

Remedial reading classes in El Paso schools first began in 1963 with a one-school, one-teacher summer program and spread to a few other schools in the following years.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 made additional funds available, and in the next 5 years the program was expanded to a total of 25 schools. The purpose of the project was to identify potentially capable pupils in grades four through 12 who for some reason had been failures, and to give them tutorial remedial instruction aimed at producing reading gains sufficient to insure academic success. During the first year of the program, the hoped-for gains failed to materialize, and program officials undertook a thorough reappraisal of procedures. Materials selections were revised, special inservice training was initiated for program teachers, facilities were upgraded, and screening procedures were refined to enable the program to diagnose more accurately the relation of reading potential to actual reading achievement. During the second year of the program, students made impressive gains. It was found that students instructed in small groups gained more than those who were tutored individually. Thus, by the 3rd year, the program emphasized individually prescribed instruction with groups of five to eight pupils.

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Although program format has been modified as a result of yearly evaluations, major objectives remain unchanged. These objectives are to: (1) raise the pupil's reading achievement to a level consistent with his reading expectancy so that he can benefit from instruction at his normal academic grade level, and (2) improve his self-concept and his social and academic acceptance in school.

Following is a summary of program personnel:

Personnel

Program director.—The program director supervises and coordinates the entire program.

Teachers (23). Teachers are responsible for administering diagnostic tests, grouping students, selecting materials, and carrying out instruction. Reading teachers work with

classroom teachers and principals in selecting students. Each teacher is responsible for a maximum of 30 students a day.

Counselors (2, part-time as needed).—The counselors do individual diagnostic testing of referred students; visit the labs periodically; coordinate work with the principals, teachers, and nurses; and assist in evaluation.

Nurses (4, part-time as needed).—The nurses provide health care services to all title I programs.

Social Workers (3, part-time as needed).—The social workers maintain home-school-lab contacts; they also serve all title I programs.

Secretaries (2).—Two full-time secretaries perform clerical activities for the program.

4 Methodology

The Remedial Reading Laboratories program had three distinguishing components: special selection and scheduling procedures, provision for systematic instructional planning, and individualized instruction. All had evolved in the course of the program's efforts to achieve its major objective of reading improvements which would allow each pupil to perform at grade level.

Special selection and scheduling procedures.—Pupils are selected for the program by a two-phase process. The first phase is a general screening based on classroom teacher referrals. Using a form provided by the district, teachers compare students' intelligence test scores to their reading test scores, and their reading scores to their mathematics scores. Students whose reading achievement appears to vary greatly from their IQ scores or their achievement in mathematics are referred as possible candidates for special remedial reading instruction in the labs.

The second phase of pupil selection includes a more refined screening of the referred candidates. Pupils are ranked by an index obtained from one of two specially devised formulas, the *Adapted Bond-Tinker Formula* and the *El Paso Formula*. The *Adapted Bond-Tinker Formula* was designed to estimate the difference between the pupil's potential and his measured achievement by comparing his reading and IQ scores. The *El Paso Formula* measures reading achievement in relation to mathematics achievement to provide a fairer estimate of a child's ability in cases of extreme reading disability or language problems. A low reading score and a high math score could indicate academic potential that was not being realized because of language difficulties. The *El Paso Formula* is often used in screening Mexican-American students for the program. According to data submitted for title I evaluation studies, children who have indexes lower than 80 percent from one or both formulas tend to achieve the greatest reading gains in the reading laboratory; therefore, the program gives priority to selection of those children.

Once students are selected, individual diagnostic tests are administered to determine the specific learning disabilities of each student and to aid in scheduling classes. The Silent Reading Diagnostic Tests by Bond-Clymer-Hoyt are used with students in grades four through six; the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test is given in grades seven through 12. Different methods of scheduling pupils for remedial reading are chosen by the principals in the various schools, depending on their individual scheduling situations. In general, students are grouped into classes by one of two methods—selection by grade levels, or grouping according to specific reading disabilities. Within each class, instructional activities are individualized, and considerable time is spent on practice and reinforcement of newly acquired skills. These skills are constantly reevaluated and used as a basis for regrouping.

Provision for systematic instructional planning.—In planning remedial instruction, teachers are urged to use the following guidelines:

- Effective reading instruction depends on thorough and continual diagnosis of individual proficiencies and deficiencies through both testing and informal analysis.
- Instruction is based on the profile of skills revealed by the diagnosis and is adjusted in response to the pupil's progress.
- Materials are sufficiently difficult to challenge the pupil, but sufficiently easy to insure his success.
- Little or no pressure from teachers and parents is brought to bear on the pupil.
- The criterion of skill mastery, rather than pupil's grade placement, governs the substance, pace, and direction of instruction.
- Individual assistance and personal encouragement are readily available to each pupil.
- No teacher is limited to a narrow range of materials or techniques.

The aforementioned books, *A Diagnostic Approach to Remedial Reading,* and *The Teacher's Source Book* were compiled by a group of principals and teachers during a summer workshop in 1969. They contain detailed descriptions of methods suggested for use in organizing programs and in correcting various types of reading problems. The books are designed to insure a uniformly rationalized and executed program in all of the participating schools.

The first volume includes, among other items, a variety of informal diagnostic tests and composite class record sheets for tabulating specific individual deficiencies. Using these forms, the teacher can determine which children have similar problems and can

quickly structure or restructure groups accordingly. The second book consists of a page-by-page item analysis of instructional materials housed in the reading laboratories. It assists teachers in locating exercises appropriate to individual and group needs.

Individualized instruction.—The major components of the instructional program are (1) individual diagnosis and prescriptive instruction, (2) small class size, and (3) varied instructional materials. Typical class sessions make use of frequently changing activities, at least three activities per session. For example, one such activity is a game designed to help children recognize and understand the formation of compound words. Working with cards on which the teacher has printed simple words such as *day, light, some, time,* the children put two cards together to form compound words such as *daylight* and *sometimes.* (For a more detailed description of methodology used in the Remedial Reading Laboratories, see the section "Specific Example of Methodology.")

Facilities.—Facilities for the remedial program are special classrooms within each school which are designated as reading labs, or sometimes special buildings located on the school grounds. In the early days of the program some laboratories had been housed in any available space, such as boiler rooms or auditorium stages, but this was corrected as part of the effort to upgrade the program after the first year. In 1969-70 there were 25 title I labs staffed by 23 teachers, two of whom rotated to serve more than one lab. Reading classrooms are organized by the teachers and generally include decorations designed to encourage reading and create a pleasant atmosphere. Desks and tables are informally grouped and can be easily rearranged for different learning activities.

In 1967-68, a special 11-room reading center was constructed on the campus at Bowie High School. The center provides a site for intensive inservice training sessions designed

to give all reading lab teachers a thorough knowledge of specialized work in the field of reading. The center has classroom facilities where 72 pupils from nearby schools are given remedial reading instruction 1 hour a day. An adjacent room is equipped with one-way mirrors through which teachers observe remedial reading techniques. The reading center also serves as a testing ground for new materials and equipment and contains a library which has over 1,400 high-interest, low-vocabulary books. It therefore serves as a resource center for teachers in the program.

Inservice training.—After the disappointing results of the program's first year, the need for specialized reading training for the teachers became apparent, and during 1967-68 an intensive inservice program on released time was conducted at the newly constructed Bowie Reading Center. In 1968-69 only 5 of the 23 teachers in the program were new, and it was therefore possible to devote inservice time to more specialized topics in reading instruction. The new teachers have a special 3-hour orientation meeting before school opens and, along with all other elementary and secondary teachers in the program, participate in other 3-hour sessions scheduled throughout the preschool week. The sessions cover such topics as program changes for the coming year and refresher instruction on the use of laboratory equipment. Continuing inservice meetings take place throughout the year including two 3-hour sessions which focus on case studies, and a meeting to discuss the screening process and the use of the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills for pretesting and posttesting. Altogether the teachers have about 27 hours of paid inservice work.

Materials and equipment.—Materials used in the laboratories include numerous texts, paperback books for pleasure reading, filmstrips, kits, games, charts, and cards. Following are a few examples of some of the materials used:

Examples of Materials	Publisher/Manufacturer
MacMillan Spectrum of Reading Skills	MacMillan Publishing Co.
SRA Reading Laboratory	Science Research Assoc.
Dr. Spello	McGraw-Hill Book Co.
Be a Better Reader Series	Prentice-Hall, Inc.
Working with Sounds (Specific Skill Series)	Barnell Loft, Ltd.
Reader's Digest Skill Builders	Reader's Digest Publishing Co.
Dolch cards	Garrard Publishing Co.
Kenworthy games	Kenworthy Publishing Co.

In addition, laboratories are stocked with equipment such as EDL Controlled Readers and tachistoscopic filmstrips, Bell and Howell Language Masters, and filmstrip projectors.

Specific Example of Methodology

Many specific examples of methodology are included in *A Diagnostic Approach to Remedial Reading*. The suggested methods are grouped according to specific reading skills to provide a quick and comprehensive reference for teachers. Once a particular skill deficiency has been diagnosed, the teacher has a ready source of possible remedial activities pertaining to that skill. Skills are divided into four categories: (1) vocabulary development, (2) comprehension skills development, (3) study skills development, and (4) fluency and rate development. One example is given from each of the four skill areas.

Vocabulary development.—One game activity used for work on basic sight vocabulary is *Word-O II*. This game was designed to provide practice in recognition of vocabulary words introduced in the day's lesson. The teacher gives each child a piece of paper

marked off into nine squares. She puts 11 or 12 of the lesson's vocabulary words on the chalkboard and directs each child to put any nine of the words on his squares in any order he chooses. As a caller pronounces the words in random order, each player covers the words called with squares of paper. The first player to cover three words in a row in any direction wins the game. This game is similar to Bingo but is designed to be more adaptable to diagnostic teaching, lending itself to specific and immediate needs of the group.

Comprehension skills development.—An activity used in this area involves newspapers. To stimulate interest in newspaper reading, the teacher supplies each student with a newspaper clipping. One brief question for each clipping is placed on the board in random order before the lesson begins. As each pupil finds an answer and reads it to the class, the question is erased from the board.

Study skills development.—To help children with organization of information, the teacher gives them pictures in mixed order. Pupils arrange the pictures to show story sequence. Later the teacher might give pupils disarranged paragraphs to put in proper sequence.

Fluency and rate development.—Time-limited reading is one activity used in this area. Children are given a short selection to read in a limited amount of time. When the teacher calls "stop," the students close their books and the teacher uncovers a series of questions written on the chalkboard which are based on the selection. The children then write or tell the answers to as many of the questions as possible.

In addition to the listing of games, exercises, and activities found in *A Diagnostic Approach to Remedial Reading,* the second book, *The Teacher's Source Book,* refers

the teacher to specific texts which can be used for independent practice by the pupil after basic instruction in the particular skill has been provided by the reading teacher.

Budget

The program Budget follows:

Instruction and administration	$168,010
Library and audiovisual	2,462
Teaching supplies	920
Equipment	2,042
Total	$173,434

Costs are somewhat higher for the program pupils in grades four through eight than for those in grades nine through 12. Based on a total of 824 pupils who completed the program in 1969-70, the average per-pupil cost is approximately $210. This cost was in addition to the amount regularly spent by the district on the full instructional program in all subjects.

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The cost of replicating the program would vary in different locations depending on salary scales, availability of facilities, etc. Instructional materials are nonexpendable, and replacement and updating are required every 6 years. The amount needed to equip one reading laboratory with all necessary materials was estimated by the program staff as follows:

Grades four through eight:	
Initial unit cost	$2,630.00
Prorated for 6 years	438.03
Per-pupil cost (50 per unit)	8.76

Grades nine through 12:	
Initial unit cost	$1,460.00
Prorated for 6 years	243.33
Per-pupil cost (50 per unit)	4.83

Evaluation

The early years of El Paso's remedial reading program were primarily developmental in nature, with the full-grown program not getting underway until the 1967-68 academic year. Steirnagle (1971) in a recent journal article described in some detail the developmental years from 1963 to 1967. This section summarizes the results of program evaluations conducted since 1967.

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The primary objectives of the Remedial Reading Laboratories program have been to: (1) raise the reading level of its pupils to the point that they can profit from instruction at their normal academic grade level, and (2) improve students' self-esteem, self-confidence, and school adjustment by providing them with successful reading improvement experiences. Since 1967 a simple pretest-posttest model has been used to evaluate reading achievement gains. Students are pretested at the beginning of the academic year and posttested at the end of that year with standardized reading achievement tests. The second objective—improvement in self-esteem, self-confidence, and school adjustment—was evaluated for 2 academic years via postprogram rating of students' classroom work habits, personal adaptability, interest, and social habits by their classroom teachers. The 3rd academic year was evaluated by preprogram and postprogram ratings which permitted evaluation of students' improvement on the same personal and social traits.

On the basis of 3 years of evaluation data, it appears that children attending the Remedial Reading Laboratories have generally made reading achievement gains greater than would be expected of average children, without reading problems, during the same period. Further, the educational significance of those gains has been demonstrated for 3 consecutive years when different achievement tests were employed. Finally, when statistical tests were run on the 1968-69 data, the gains were found to be statistically as well as educationally significant.

Teachers Ratings of Student Behavior

At the end of the 1967-68 and 1968-69 academic years, a random sample of students completing the Remedial Reading Laboratories experience were rated by their classroom teachers in regard to their work habits, personal adaptability, interest, and social habits in the classroom. Teachers were asked to rate the students on a five-point scale ranging from excellent to unsatisfactory. The sample size was 107 and 105 students for the 1967-68 and 1968-69 academic years, respectively. More than 80 percent of those students rated at the end of both years were given a rating of average or above for all four categories rated.

A similar rating of a sample of students was conducted during the 1969-70 school year. However, unlike previous years, the rating was done prior to entry into the remedial program and after the program was completed. A random sample of 106 students were rated in October and again in May. There was a considerable increase in the percentage of students given above average and excellent ratings after they completed the program.

On the basis of the teacher rating data, it appears that the remedial reading experience received by the children resulted in some improvement in their self-confidence and self-esteem which manifested itself in improved personal and social school behavior.

Followup Results

From the group of students that completed the remedial program during the 1967-68 academic year, 180 students were selected for followup in 1968-69. The followup students fell into one of three categories:

Category 1—students reading at normal grade level in May 1968, who had made 3 or more years gain in reading achievement during the 1967-68 school year.

Category 2—students reading at grade level in May 1968, who made less than 3 years' gain in reading achievement during 1967-68.

Category 3—students reading below grade level in May 1968, who made at least 3 years' gain in reading achievement during 1967-68.

During December of 1968, these students' current teachers were asked to rate the students' classroom adjustment in terms of a three-point scale (good, borderline, poor). Analysis of the rating data indicated that 90 percent of the students in category 1 and more than 80 percent of the students in the other two categories were considered by their teachers to be well adjusted to school. Only 3 percent of the students were considered to have school adjustment problems.

Reading, mathematics, and social studies grades for the first marking period were also analyzed for the 180 students followed up. The students in categories 1 and 2 had an average grade in all three subjects above C, while the mean grade for those students in category 3 was C in mathematics and slightly below C in the other two subjects.

On the basis of the followup described above and 2 years of additional followup of those students, it was concluded that a large percentage of students from the 1967-68 student group have continued to retain their ability to cope with grade-level subject matter and have improved attitudes toward self, school, and society.

Modifications and Suggestions

Based on program findings concerning the effectiveness of small-group instruction as compared to individual tutoring, staff members suggested the possibility of increasing class size to 10 and providing a paraprofessional aide for each teacher. The addition to the teacher training program of a medium-level course in the psychology of reading was another suggested modification.

Sources for Further Information

For further information concerning the Remedial Reading Laboratories, the following individuals may be contacted:

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☆U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE 1972 O—455-005

MODEL PROGRAMS—Compensatory Education Series

Fifteen promising compensatory education programs for the disadvantaged are included in this series. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

College Bound Program, New York, N.Y.

Diagnostic Reading Clinic, Cleveland, Ohio

The Fernald School Remediation of Learning Disorders Program, Los Angeles, Calif.

Higher Horizons 100, Hartford, Conn.

The Juan Morel Campos Bilingual Center, Chicago, Ill.

Learning To Learn Program, Jacksonville, Fla.

More Effective Schools, New York, N.Y.

Mother-Child Home Program, Freeport, N.Y.

Preschool Program, Fresno, Calif.

Project Conquest, East St. Louis, Ill.

Project Early Push, Buffalo, N.Y.

Project MARS, Leominster, Mass.

Project R-3, San Jose, Calif.

PS 115 Alpha One Reading Program, New York, N.Y.

Remedial Reading Laboratories, El Paso, Texas

Two programs also identified for this series were described in the *Model Program—Reading* series: Programed Tutorial Reading Project, Indianapolis, Indiana, and Summer Junior High Schools, New York, New York. Since these program descriptions are still current and available from the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, they were not rewritten for this series.

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GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE
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DHEW Publication No. (OE) 72-78